





JASON MOORE 2018-05-13

HOW THE CHICKEN NUGGET BECAME THE TRUE SYMBOL OF OUR ERA

ECONOFICTION, NECROPOLITICS CAPITAL, CAPITALOCENE, CHEAP FOUR, CHICKEN, FOOD INDUSTRY, MARXISM

by Ray Patel and Jason W. Moore

The most telling symbol of the modern era isn't the automobile or the smartphone. It's the chicken nugget. Chicken is already the most popular meat in the US, and is projected to be the planet's favourite flesh by 2020. Future civilisations will find traces of humankind's 50 billion bird-a-year habit in the fossil record, a marker for what we now call the Anthropocene. And yet responsibility for the dramatic change in our consumption lies not so much in general human activity, but capitalism. Although we're taught to understand it as an economic system, capitalism doesn't just organise hierarchies of human work. Capitalism is what happens when power and money combine to turn the natural world into a profit-making machine. Indeed, the way we understand nature owes a great deal to capitalism.

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